



PREFACE

Like most other African countries, Eritrea was formed in the late 1980s by colonialism. It has been under Italian, British and Ethiopian rule. In May 1991 after thirty years of armed struggle for their right to self-determination, the

Eritrean People's for Liberation Front (EPLF) defeated the Ethiopian military

established a Provisional Government. The State of

independence in 1991 after thirty years of war

on May 24th 1993 after a UN supervised

8% of the people voted in favor. Eritrea, which

United Nations in May 1993, is a small country

125,000 sqkm (over 48,000 square miles) in

Eritrea has over 100 islands and a 670 mile

it is bordered to the north and west by Sudan, to

the southeast by Djibouti.

geographic regions namely, the temperate and

hot and humid western lowlands, hot and arid

eastal lands, with average elevations of about

0 meters respectively.

Asmara (population of about 400,000). The main

ports are Massawa and Assab.

Zones and their Capitals:

Central Zone - Asmara

Debube

Anseba

Gash/Barka

Northern Red Sea

Southern Red Sea

forces in the country

Eritrea obtained

and its official

referendum in which

joined the group

located in the Horn

northeast Africa.

coastline along the

the south by Ethiopia

it consists of four

cool central high

eastern lowlands

2000, 1000, 500

Capitals:

Asmara

Debube

Anseba

Gash/Barka

Northern Red Sea

Southern Red Sea

Massawa

Baren

Mendefera

Keren

Baren

Massawa

Baren

Mendefera

Keren

Baren

Massawa

Baren

Population: 3.5 million (50% are females)

Growth rate: 3 percent per annum Labor Force



Ethnic Groups: Igrigna, Tigre, Saño, Afar, Baza,
Nara and Rasnaidá

Literacy Rate: 20% (10% for women)

Life Expectancy: 47 years

Infant/Mortality rate: 136 per 1000 births (EDHS)

GDP per Capita: US\$ 217.234

The government working languages are Igrinya, Arabic and English

The Government of Eritrea (GOE) is composed of legislative, executive and

judicial branches. The government sets the internal and external policies of the country. The President is the head of state and the cabinet is the executive branch of the government.

The cabinet is composed of seventeen ministers. The President is elected independently of both the legislative and executive branches. The judicial system extends from the village community to sub-regional, regional and national levels.

Head of State: President Isaias

Political Party: Peoples Front for Democracy and Justice (PFDJ)

Flag: Green, red and white

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The Economy

Eritrea is basically an agricultural country. 80% rural (50% farmers and 30% pastoralists). Though women account for a large percentage of the agriculture

labor force, they find out that their contribution to the GDP is very small. yet earnings of domestic workers are considered in

Arable land is 32,000sq.km

Cultivated land is 20,000sq.km

Natural resources: Agriculture (oilseed, cotton, livestock etc)

Marine (fish, salt etc.)

Minerals: gold, silver metallic and industrial minerals etc.

Manufactures: Textiles, Footwear, Leather goods, Salt, Oilseed etc.

Imports: Machinery, petroleum products, industrial inputs.

The Eritrean National Progress Report on the implementation of the Platform for Action has been prepared in conformity with the guidelines from the UN-division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) and Economic Commission for Africa, Africa Center for Women (ECA/ACW).

The report tries to assess the national strife undertaken to ensure the implementation of the Platforms for action five years after the Beijing Conference in 1995. It highlights the achievements and constraints encountered in the design and execution of the overall national priorities within which the integration of women in development should rank high.

The design of the country's macro policy, the role of the Eritrean government and the role of the National Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) to liaise with the government and other non-governmental organizations, in order to ensure

complementary rather than duplication and to avoid redundancy in

setting up priorities and ensuring that women's mobilization and participation in development sector's policies have been the major and concerns are incor

The efforts to promote the economic and social status of women relied in particular on the development strategies that stem from the goals and objectives of the International Development Strategy. The basic guide for a continuous process towards the advancement of women and their full integration in the economic, political, social and cultural development has been the formulation of the National Forward-Looking Strategy that incorporated guide for global action on a long-term basis.

to provide practical The adaptation of a national plan with action at all levels

Acknowledging the existing and potential obstacles for the achievement of the objectives of the Decade - equality, development and peace - the government has tried to address major issues that include the legislative changes and enactment, which is the basis for action and acts as a catalyst for societal change; the design of a macro-policy which addresses the basis of inequality, that is, poverty and backwardness of the majority of the population and changes in the power structure, social structure, work conditions, society and development issues and peace initiatives.

of women
ral aspects;

the development of a Constitution in 1997 which
and their participation in the political, economic, soc

repeal of the Civil Code of Marriage and Family which excludes
traditional practices and ensures equal rights; Penal Code to exclude all
discriminatory clauses and add protective measures for women; the
Fundamental Law that endues women equal ownership are some of the

which was signed and ratified on 1993, the Convention on the Elimination of

Discrimination against women, signed in 1995, has to be taken into account.

was established in 1979 as a non-governmental organization (NGO) with the

mandate to mobilize women to fight for gender equality, has continued its commitment after independence for

as branches at

equality, has continued its commitment after independence for

objective. Currently, NUEW has over 200,000 me

the national, sub-national, and community level.

Other civil societies is another aspect which the NQEW has been working.

Based on the stated plan of action, the NQEW prioritizes and coordinates the action plan with the concerned ministries.

Besides NQEW has also set up its own objectives and programs whereby it

which implements the plans of action through its country-

include:-

- eliminate all forms of discrimination against

- create an environment conducive to the

meaningful participation of women in all s

- enhance the quality of life for women as well as for the community at large

- sensitize and enhance gender awareness to women and the society at large

In traditional Eritrean society, women neither had the right to vote, nor be elected in the village council of elders. They could neither attend nor negotiate their cases at the village council of elders, nor could they attend and negotiate their cases at the village assembly. Women could only present their cases to

the council through their male relatives. These exclusionist and discriminatory practices continued during the colonial era, and were reflected, for example, in the fact that women were not allowed to vote during the brief semi-parliamentary rule of the Eritrean-Ethiopian federation in the 1950s.

Moreover, Article 20 of the Eritrean Constitution of 1952 reads as follows: "The

possessing Eritrean citizenship who

are male originated traditions in the

only began during the

ally involved in combat

of political mobilization

ult the public was exposed

verful women who made

country. This drive toward

regions shall consist of the
liberation struggle. More than 30% women
and other support roles and contributed to
and social reform through the EPLF
to "strong" heroic, politically conscious
significant contributions to the liberation
unified and egalitarian society.

The rights of women were incorporated into the National Democratic Program (NDP) at the first congress of the EPLF in 1978. The program's objectives included:

- ◆ Promulgate marriage and family laws that safeguard women.
- ◆ Protect the rights of women to two months' maternal pay.
- ◆ Protect the rights of mothers and children and nursery and kindergarten services.

"Mother-child health care services will be improved and expanded".

So, there are clearly positive guidelines, a supportive policy environment and

- ◆ The Convention of the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW), signed in September 5, 1995.
- ◆ The ratification of the new Constitution, which emphasized that, "any act that violates the human rights of women or limits or otherwise thwarts their role and participation is prohibited".
- ◆ Land tenure system based on equality, proclaimed:

- ◆ A legal minimum age for marriage set at 18 years.
- ◆ Citizenship rights given to all Eritrean children without distinction (previously this right was given to a child born of an Eritrean father, but not to one born only of an Eritrean mother).
- ◆ 30% of seats reserved for women at the national and regional assemblies
- ◆ High priority given to service delivery where women are the primary beneficiaries, be it in health, education or provision of water.

2. Gender awareness sensitization and Civic education.

Conducting civic education and gender awareness programs with the aim to eliminate negative socio-cultural practices and attitudes towards

information nation-wide.

2.2 The Constitution

In February 1994, the National Assembly elected a five-member Commission. Out of these, 20 were women. The Commission was committed to addressing gender issues through drafting a constitution. Based on democratic participatory mechanisms, the constitution was drafted

- ◆ Struggle to eradicate prostitution.
- ◆ Respect the rights of women not to engage in work harmful to their health.

The EPLF also promulgated new laws and policies promoting the advancement of women in many areas, by securing women's rights to:

- ◆ Ownership of land (including divorcees, widows and unmarried).
- ◆ Equal pay for equal work.
- ◆ Equal rights in the family.
- ◆ Access to health care in rural and remote areas.
- ◆ Access to education for children and adults.

The historical development of the liberation front, which adopted policies in the areas of gender equality, towards social transformation greatly influenced the government's policy on women. National policies and objectives, including the Human Resources Development and Population section in the Macro Policy Framework and in the Constitution, thus articulated a clear and strong gender equality objective. It clearly states:

...undertaken to sensitise and enhance the decisive role of women for the national transformation of the country".

...be upheld and all laws that detract from the right will be abolished".

...and appropriate to women in education, economic activities and employment will be expanded".

"Appropriate labor saving technologies will be introduced to reduce the drudgery of women in the household and in other activities".

The Constitution is the supreme law of the land. Thus any legislation that contradicts with the Eritrean constitution is null and void (Article 2 EC).

The Constitution applies to both genders with no discrimination (Article 5).

Article 7 prohibits "any act that violates the human right of women or limits or their role and participation". Women are entitled to political, economic, social and cultural aspects.

The Eritrean Constitution reflects the spirit of equality

and protects the fundamental rights of human beings with no on the bases of race, ethnic origin, disability, age, political economic status of any other ground.

2.3 Women in Political Leadership

After the referendum in May of 1993, in which 98% of Eritrea celebrated its first official independence.

The State of Eritrea was established with the Council of Ministers and the National Parliament.

3. Director General	1	4	20.0%	20	4.1	4.8%
4. Directors	1	0	0%	9	11.5	7.8%
5. Provincial Governors	0	30	0%	0	6	0%
Sub-Total	2	34	3%	53	5.7%	
6. District Administrator	1	109	6.8%	3	11.5	23.0%
7. Deputy	1			6	7.5	85.7%
8. Counsellors	1			1		

- N.B
1. The women in the Quota System are elected by both sexes in their respective community. The competition is among women only.
 2. In the Free election they compete with men.

It is however noted that certain cultural and traditional practices have continued to slacken women's access to and control of productive resources.

3. EDUCATION AND TRAINING OF WOMEN AND GIRL CHILD

3.1 Education policy and objectives

The GSE believes that the core of its development strategy of human resource. The one need of the reconstruction of the economy will depend on the development of the production of a modern, literate and skilled manpower. To meet these needs, the GSE has declared free and compulsory basic education for all persons irrespective of sex and ethnic origin.

national development strategy, as outlined in the Macro-Policy document

includes the following objectives:

- ◆ Improved agricultural production through the development of agriculture, and through enhancing the productivity of agro-pastoralist
- ◆ Developed capital and knowledge-intensive, export-oriented industries and services.
- ◆ An upgraded and technologically informed informal sector.

To achieve the above goals, the national development strategy intends to:

- ◆ produce a population equipped with the necessary skills, knowledge and culture for a self-reliant and modern economy,

- Develop self consciousness and self-motivation in the population to fight poverty, disease and the attendant causes of backwardness and ignorance.
- Make basic education available to all, irrespective of their ethnic origin, sex, religion etc.

Based on the belief that education is a human right and a major tool for development, peace and equality, the education sector policy, which has been

51% of enrollment rate achieved in 1999, the objective has been achieved.

To meet these objectives, mobilization of resources, both human and material has been of great concern within the ministry, its organizations and the community at large. Several measures have been undertaken to make accessibility easier for all school aged children, especially on the most disadvantaged sectors of the society, mainly girls in geographically remote areas of the country.

- ◆ Construction of new schools with focus on the rural and remote areas
- ◆ On the job training for primary and secondary school teachers
- ◆ Recruitment of more teachers taking into consideration female teachers, the ethnic diversities of the school

◆ Sensitization of teachers within the teacher training institutions (TTI).

◆ Creating gender awareness in the communities to acknowledge that education is the basis for equality and social change.

◆ Ensure the quality education rendered in the schools.

◆ Provision of teaching-aid materials and production of materials have been the major concerns of the

◆ Provision of gender-sensitive MOE

◆ Several seminars have been conducted in the last few years to identify discrimination in girls' education. As the economic and social factors have been found to be the major cause of girls' lower participation, retention and

◆ Several studies have been conducted over the last four years (1995-1999) to identify the outcome of the study. The results have been found out to be the major cause of girls' lower participation, retention and

School factors include inadequate educational facilities and materials, shortage of female teachers in remote areas and school distance have been found out to be the major causes of lower retention and achievement of girls irrespective of the equal opportunities granted.

The MOE is trying to challenge the social and economic drawback through the enforcement of marriage law, reducing domestic chores in collaboration with the responsible ministries, bringing schools nearer to the community and provision of facilities. It is expected that such measures would ameliorate the gender imbalances in education, reduce drop out rates and improve girls' performance.

exerted to expand education and development of training programs to attract more teachers with focus on the minorities and female teachers, since 1995.

The following tables indicate increase enrollment ensuring upgrade the quality of teacher

Table 3.1: Primary level (1-5)

Planned Actions	Base Year, 1995			1998		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Schools	-	-	510	-	-	585
Enrollment	146172	121268	267438	101111	107101	208212
Gross Enrollment ratio	55%	47%	51%	48%	44%	44%
Teachers	3609	1974	5583	3906	5799	9705
Qualified teachers	65%	51%	52%	-	68%	-
Promotion	71%	72%	-	-	-	-

Table 3.2: Middle level (6-7)

Planned Actions	Base Year	
	Male	Female
Schools	-	-

1998		
Male	Female	Total
-	-	111

18.8%	17%	18.8%	17%	18.8%	17%
7.9%	8%	7.9%	8%	7.9%	8%
73.2%	80%	73.2%	80%	73.2%	80%
Gross Enrollment ratio			25%		
Teachers			13%		
Qualified teachers			94%		
Flow rate, Repeating			6%		
Withdrawals			7%		
Promotion			80%		

Table 3.3: Second

Base Year, 1995	1998			Planned Actions	
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female
27823	22097	4831	38728	25198	
16%	17%	12%	15%	18%	
974	973	108	1081	850	
	12%	88%	47%	10%	
			28%	13%	83%
			6.8%	7%	7%
			65.2%	73%	59%

The past three years of the education system (1996-1998) have witnessed a gradual increment of the student enrollment at all the primary, middle and secondary levels. As far as gender distribution is concerned, the gross enrollment ratio for girls has gone up from 44% 21% and 12% to 47%, 31% and 13% at all

for management training and development of partnership with various international institutions for training the teachers, school heads and supervisors has resulted in the improvement of teachers qualifications. In 1998, the percentage of qualified teachers at the primary, middle and secondary level was 64%, 43% and 71% respectively. The impact is observed improvement of the flow rates of the school population at large.

growth in the number of female teachers is keeping pace with the overall

in the number of teachers. Introduction of affirmative actions to

use the recruitment of female teachers, with focus on the minorities.

from the female teachers, the establishment of an effective

and the integration of gender sensitive issues, methodologies and

raising awareness of the teacher's role in the educational process within

teacher training programs and the school organization has helped to

improve teachers' effectiveness and the recruitment of female teachers.

improving the effectiveness of teaching methods and efficient and continuous

assessment procedures have been the major targets in reducing wastage and

and the retention rate of girls in particular. This plan has considered the

achievement of higher learning achievements of girls and more guidance, extra

and counseling have been the major parts of the teaching methods. For

girls at an advantage, more efforts have been made to raise the

participation of girls in practical activities of the curriculum and extra

discussion groups and debates.

Regional seminars and workshops on girls' education have been conducted to

raise awareness about the status, role and contribution of women and girls in

society. Greater participation of the parents through the Parent Teacher

Association (PTA) to tackle the major problems of girls education have been

introduced at school and village levels.

Improving the curriculum and provision of textbooks has also been the main

concern of the ministry in the last four years. Development and review

more responsive to the diversities, local needs, and demands of the society, to make it more gender sensitive, and the integration of basic moral and civic values in the national curriculum have been given greater considerations. Textbooks have already been distributed to all the primary and secondary level school population.

Asmara business & commerce	34.8	28%
Basic Vocational Centers		25%
Teachers Training Institute (T.T.I.)		
Nursing School		
Health Assistants		
Paramedics		
Midwife		

Source: MOE Education Statistics

At tertiary level, the secondary school leaving examination has been one of the main hindrances from the continuation of education for both the boy and the girl students. A review of the exam and an increase in the capacity of the Asmara University to entertain more students has boomed the opportunity for more high school graduates to join the University. Female enrolment gradually increased with the introduction of a positive discrimination lowering the University entrance criteria. Female enrolment has reached 18% of the total day and evening participants.

Table 3.5: Female enrolment at Asmara University, 1998

Qualification	Male	Female	Total	Female %
Day programme				
Degree	2522	521	2643	19.3
Diploma	465	50	515	9.7
Certificate	130	35	165	21.2
Sub-total	3117	606	3723	16.3
Evening programme				
Degree	102	15	117	12.8
Diploma	3	1	4	25.0
Sub-total	105	16	121	13.2
GRAND TOTAL	3222	622	3844	16.2

Table 3.6: Percentage of Female students graduating from the University of Asmara, Degree Programme, 1998-1999

Educational activities geared towards adults have been rapidly growing since 1996. These activities which are organized and monitored by the MOE and the NUEW have been on a steady and rapid growth since 1996. In 1998,

there were 283 centers throughout the six regions of the country. Table 3.7 shows the details.

Table 3.7 Female participation in Adult Educational Programmes, 1996-1998

Year	Total No. of participants	Female %
1996	5609	93%
1997	4710	97%
1998	7936	95.5%

Statistics Report, 1998: Adult Education, 1999

Source: M

the State of Education State Government of the Government of

In addition, the G

Women of child bearing age group and children, in developing countries, make 60% of the population. Thus, the health and illness of these groups is an important measurement of the health status of a country.

Estimated Maternal Mortality Rate in Eritrea, according to a 1998 survey. In 1998, according to a survey, the Mortality Rate in Eritrea to be 985 per 100,000 live births.

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women every day due to pregnancy and delivery related complications. These maternal deaths represent approximately 27% of all

deaths to women in reproductive age (15-49). The maternal death in Eritrea is among the worst in the world. As already stated, majority of maternal deaths are related to labor and delivery, hepatitis, anemia and malaria complications.

(MOH, 1997)

Early marriage, early pregnancy and child bearing pose grave health risks to Eritrean women and girls, especially in the rural areas. Despite efforts by the Government as well as the National Union of Eritrean Women and

other concerned bodies female genital mutilation is almost universal in Eritrea, with 95 percent of women having been circumcised. Younger women (age 15

and 19) and women living in the Southern and Central Zones are slightly less likely to be circumcised than other women. Of circumcised women 6 in 10 had

clitoridectomy, one in three received infibulation and 4 percent had excision. One in five circumcised women had a problem during sexual relations or

during delivery, 9 percent had both types of problems (EDHS, 1995).

4.2 Policy of the Ministry of Health

The GSE believes that women have the right to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standards of physical and mental health. In Eritrea, almost all causes of ill health and death in women are preventable with appropriate and accessible health care delivery system. Recognizing the importance of the problem, the policy of Ministry of Health of Eritrea focuses mainly on

improving the health of the mother and the child through Primary Health Care (PHC). Some of the PHC policies that concentrate on women's health are the following:

accessibility of fully integrated quality reproductive and sexual services to individuals and families;

reducing maternal mortality rates;

increasing the proportion of pregnant women who receive antenatal care;

increasing the proportion of women receiving safe delivery services;

reducing the incidence of obstetric complications;

increasing the immunization coverage of child bearing;

eliminating the practice of unsafe abortion;

reducing the incidence of children;

preventing HIV; and

eliminating other harmful

practices such as the use of contraceptive methods;

ensuring women freely choose the number

and timing of their children;

eliminating the practice of female genital

modification and other traditional practices that affect women;

eliminating Traditional Birth Attendants (TBA) and Community Health Agents (CHA).

The Community Health Service policy is based on the following principles: 1. Community Health Agents (CHA) and Community Health Attendants (CHA) are the main actors in the PHC system.

2. Measures undertaken to achieve the

objectives were constructed

After the independence of the country, 1

health care facilities are organized within the structure of the health care delivery system of the Government which is based on five levels:

1. National Level: There are 7 national referral hospitals, expected to serve the total population. There are 49 and 4 maternal and child health care centers through out the country.
2. Zone level: There are 11 hospitals and 5 mini hospitals expected to serve 80,000-200,000 population.

Sub-zone level: There are 25 sub-zones and 261 traditional health

in the country, expected to serve 300,000 people.

nding administrative level: There are 149 health stations and 36
 expected to serve 5,000 - 10,000 people at group of village.

unity level: There are more than 200 trained TBA's and 152
 unity health agents, expected to serve 400 to 1000 people at a
 level. There is also a plan to train about 400 TBAs and 150 CHA in

at 1400 CHA, in order to deal with a shortage of health

The following tables, Table 4.1 and Table 4.2 show the existing health
 facilities and the type of training for health workers in the country.

Table 4.1 Health Facilities in Eritrea

Facilities	1991	1995	1998
People's Health	12	2	3
Health Centers	1	1	1
Health Stations	149	149	149
Total	162	152	153

Total 106
 Source: MOH, 1999

Table 4.2 Health Coverage per year

Service	Coverage Rate			Year
	1997	1998	1999	
Antenatal	41.7%	42.7%	44.2%	1998
Delivery	23.7%	23.8%	18.6%	1998
DPT 3	53.8%	55.5%	59.1%	1998
2-5	74.8%	77.7%	72.7%	1998
Planning Service	23.2%	25.0%	29.0%	1998

Antenatal
 Delivery
 DPT 3
 2-5
 Planning Service

The increment in the health converge rate per year reflects the improvement of the MOH capacity in giving services.

60.3% were exclusively related to child and women

been extended to improve the quality of MOH professionals and increase the number of women in the health professions to achieve equality. Table 2.4 indicates the details.

Table 4.3 Health professionals by sex:

	Qualification	Male	Female	Total	%
1)	Doctors, surgeon, medical	93	15	108	13.26
2)	Radiology/physiotherapist	4	1	5	0.62
3)	MA in public health, pharmacy	21	1	22	2.75
4)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
5)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
6)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
7)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
8)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
9)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
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24)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
25)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
26)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
27)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
28)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
29)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
30)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
31)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
32)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
33)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
34)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
35)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
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68)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
69)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
70)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
71)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
72)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
73)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
74)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
75)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
76)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
77)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
78)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
79)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
80)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
81)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
82)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
83)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
84)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
85)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
86)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
87)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
88)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
89)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
90)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
91)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
92)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25
93)	MA in health services	1	1	2	0.25
94)	MA in health statistics	1	1	2	0.25
95)	MA in health economics	1	1	2	0.25
96)	MA in health law	1	1	2	0.25
97)	MA in health education	1	1	2	0.25
98)	MA in health communication	1	1	2	0.25
99)	MA in health information	1	1	2	0.25
100)	MA in health management	1	1	2	0.25

10

SA in natural & social

At the time of liberation in 1991, the public enterprises were non-operational and the agricultural sector, social services and infrastructure were destroyed.

In order to revive and develop the dismantled economy, the Government has developed a broad-based economic policy, in which the private sector has a leading role in the economic development. The government's intervention is limited to certain business activities to stabilize the market.

To complement the macro-policy (published in 1994), the government developed broad-based policy strategies that mainly include human resource development, export-oriented development both in the agriculture and infrastructure development, environmental protection and private sector policy framework was to improve

rise 50% of the total population and they are mostly employees and self-employed. However, the industry is still poor due to the completed

At present, Eritrean women are mostly engaged in trade and their performance

of education, inadequate credit facilities and social and cultural attitudes.

in line with the government's strategies and programs that aim to increase the contribution of women in economic development with the following

- Provision of equal access to credit facilities.
- Provision of training programs.
- Dissemination of information relevant to their business development.
- Provision of technical and market research assistance.
- Creating an environment conducive for the effective participation of women in trade and industry.
- The right to own land.

More than 50% of the population being engaged in agriculture, the government developed the new Land Proclamation adopted by the National

right of access to land for housing and farming upon the attainment

of "emancipated" women being given the highest spot greatly expected to participate in the market-oriented

structure, the main aim of the GSE is to improve production through and enhancing the productivity of peasants, pastoralist and agro-ecologist. Policies were formulated to shift agricultural investment towards production (peasant and commercial), irrigated agriculture and areas with production potential.

Women's role in agricultural production is extensive, although traditionally excluded from ploughing. Women are involved throughout the pre-planting and harvest cycles, in weeding, planting, harvesting, storage and

processing of produce in addition to other farm work. Women are especially involved in fetching water, fuel wood and all the other domestic tasks of preparing food for their family, washing clothing and raising children. Women also produce vegetables, raise poultry and pottery, handicrafts and other activities which supplement the family income. Despite the back-braking work which consumes 16 hours of their day, women's contribution in production from irrigated agriculture is not considered insignificant and should be included in the GDP.

Table 5.1 Number of women engaged in irrigated agriculture

Description	No. of persons	
	Male	Female
Total	209	2794
Land holding in hectares	147.8	2432
Particulars		

Source: MOA, *Female Agricultural Survey*, 1997, unpublished

The number of women is lower than men, mainly because (a) of the

by the Ministry

Female Concession	Male Concession	Size of land. Female	Percentage Female
14	396	513	3.6
15	71	21.45	21.1
6	40	69.43	15
5	25	145	20
3	10	67	30
755.58	808		Total 43

Source: Ministry of Land, Water & Environment, 1999. * Inhabitants are mostly pastoralists.

The development of women owned enterprises, like in other developing countries, depend on their performance in market which in turn depends on their level of education, the size of capital, level of skill and the type of technology utilized. Women who own business establishments are mainly

bars, hotels, beauty salon

found in service giving sector, such as

women are involved in

as well as retail and whole sale

in import and export business

manufatures, such as wood prodig

mainly reside in cities and regional

textile and leather products. The

it is found out that they are

Many of those women who own

disciplines, devoted, careful and efficient in their activities

towns. Irrespective of the patri

Table 5.3 Women entrepreneurs in Manufacturing, Trade and Services sector and growth

SECTORS	1996		1998		FEMALE	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	%	Growth rate
Manufacture	2475	249	2591	206	10	18
Trade	3636	6923	40973	7004		
Services	1659	4531	3383	145		

Source: Business Libensio

5.2 Women's share in the Labor force

The distribution of human power resource among the different economic sectors is affected by the structure of the economy. The Eritrean economic activity is dominated by trade activities, thus it comprises 65% of the labor force.

A comprehensive baseline survey was made by Ministry of Trade and Industry (MOI) in 1996 to identify the registered number of trade enterprises and their employees. The study revealed that women, especially in manufacturing, trade and service sectors, constitute 31% of the total labor force, as compared to men 69%. The proportion of women labor force, as compared to men is 31% in manufacturing, 26% in trade and 41% in service.

Table 5.4 Women's share in total labor force in Industry

Sector	1996		1998		% of 1996	% of 1998
	Male	Female	Male	Female		
Manufacturing	18679	8308	6841	17610	33	28
Trade	55389	18964	81271	128558	16	30
Service	16406	10076	10563	12695	41	28

Source: Ministry of Trade and Industry, 1996, 1998.

In 1998, the percentage of women employees in industry has shown a declining trend by 8% as compared to that of 1996. The main reason is, most of the public enterprises are now privatized and hence have reduced their employment.

In the total Labor force of Eritrea Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and location, including the informal sector.

Total	Sectoral Group		
	Manufacturing	Trade	Service

Table

Employment Total	92288	21633	55684	14971
% Female Employment	42	52	43	25
2000-2001	37	26		
4000-10000	45	26		
47	74	37	19	
52188	12844	31584	7890	
46	66	40	25	

onal Team and Yacob Fesseha, 1996.

higher proportion of women work force in Micro is found in
ring, and in Small and Medium groups in Trade, 46% and 37%

ile industry. By location the distribution of women textile labor force is 97%
d are found in the capital city Asmara the majority of women labor force in
de, 57% is found in the major towns.

Measures taken for promotion of women in economic empowerment

and prohibitions on imports have been eliminated. Women have equal

employment opportunities and are encouraged to participate in all sectors of the economy.

licitor and discrimination.

procedures have been simplified and quick and efficient

is provided.

rol have been lifted, except with respect to bread and

tical products.

one has been introduced to encourage trade and investments.

especially those capital

raw materials are made

group farms have been progress

goods, intermediates, industrial sp

pay value-added, excise and sales taxes. The government has also

reduced income taxes both personal and corporate taxes, these would

incentive and encourage women to improve their financial situation.

- ◆ Credit facilities. Access to bank loans was made available to women by Commercial Bank, Development and Investment Bank and Housing Bank. These loans were mostly used to start-up business activities especially for domestic trade, manufacturing and agricultural activities. However, few

of facilities, mainly because they
 of clients and lack of confidence.

"Women" have benefited from
 could satisfy normal bank
 Although recent data

years.

In addition, the Eritrean Community Development Fund
 Union of Eritrean Women (NUEW) and Debub Zone
 Schemes (ACORD) have also provided women credit fac

those who do not have sufficient collateral and training add, advice
 in the business of home based activities

of credit in the local

Table 5.6 Total number of women clients in
 currency (Nakfa) 1998 and 05/99.

				No. clients	Loans (mill)
Savings & Credit	472	407,728	155	2,128,421	
Savings & Credit	483	442,503	541	954,100	
Dev. Zone Savings & Credit	352	1,595,050	2500	4,720,300	
Dev. & Investment Bank			10	17,448,819	
	808	2,445,278	4902	25,248,640	

ECDF, NUEW, South Zone and Dev. & Investment bank, 1999.

Various training programs were designed and conducted by the government

in collaboration with non-governmental agencies such as the Ministry of

NUEW, German Otto von Guericke Stiftung, University, Chamber of

and ACORD GT

work, masonry, electricity, metal work, auto-mechanics, weaving, secretarial science, computer, accounting, marketing, etc. Moreover, the Ministry of Trade and Industry has introduced foreign trade training programs in collaboration with PRODEC on export management training and carried out in 1994 to 1998. In addition:

- Investment related assistance are provided to encourage women to

enterprises is in the process and some of these are:

products of women such as leather and leather-
leather, uniforms have been promoted through the
markets abroad.

enterprises have been established and some investments are

underway to rehabilitate and modernize the infrastructure facilities such as
communications, transport and other services which helps to improve

women's contribution in all economic activities

Under the Integrated Export Management Training and Foreign Trade
Development projects for Eritrea, 1995-1998, 16 training programs were
conducted whereby 327 (234 male and 93 female) were trained.

6. HUMAN RIGHTS OF WOMEN

6.1 Legal Status of Women in Eritrea.

Legislation in Eritrea guarantees equal treatment of women and
men, and secures the rights of women in particular. Eritrea being a

party to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination

Against Women, reflects the fact that the GSI recogni

in the national law guarantees that the mechanism to promote and protect
these rights is in place.

However, while women are increasingly using the legal system to exercise
their rights, the lack of awareness of the existence of these rights is an

obstacle that prevents women from fully enjoying their human rights and attained equality. Hence, development of system to strengthen women's exercise their right remains a great challenge. Regardless of their education level, women can be empowered and motivated to exercise their rights.

in cooperation with the Ministry of Justice has designed education and counseling and advisory services to promote the human rights of women, including to redress violations of their rights.

and the process of developing an information system on gender violence whose findings will be integrated into all of its programs and activities to ensure equality and non-discrimination under the law and practice.

6.2 Legal Provisions Guaranteeing Women's Rights.

The Government of the State of Eritrea, made several revisions on the Eritrean Civil and Penal Codes to eliminate discrimination against women. The proclamation of September 1999 and further guarantees the equal rights of women in the National Democratic Party which prohibits any discrimination on the basis of gender and promotion. And later on, each and every article of the 1999 reflects the spirit of equality in human rights with no distinction on the basis of disability, age, political status or economic status or any other ground. Article 7 prohibits "any discrimination on the basis of race, ethnic origin, sex, religion, or economic status or any other ground."

Revisions made to the Ethiopian Civil and Penal Codes, on Marriage and the Family include:

- ◆ Women can enter into marriage freely, and are afforded equal rights as men (Article 48).
- ◆ Marriage is based on the free consent of both partners, and needs no parental consent (Article 46).
- ◆ Bride price and dowry are prohibited by law (Article 49).
- ◆ Kidnapping for marriage is illegal (Article 50).
- ◆ The legal age for marriage was raised to 18 years.
- ◆ Marriage is a partnership which gives the husband and wife equal rights in their households (Article 45).
- ◆ The safety of children born out of wedlock is determined on the basis of the best interests of the child (Article 51).
- ◆ Divorce can be initiated by both women and men, but the proceedings are still conducted by a committee of elders whose decisions in regard to property, child support and custody are not subject to court endorsement.

6.3 The Labor Law

The labor law is framed by representatives of workers, trade unions, NUEW and the various governmental bodies. Eritrean labor law is governed by the Provisional Labor Proclamation No. 8/1991. This proclamation was enforced since September 15/1991. Thus, Article 113(3) abrogated all laws and proclamation existed prior to this provisional labor proclamation.

Article 47 requires an employer to pay the same starting salary for the same work. Thus, this proclamation leaves no room for discrimination based on sex, race, religion or any other ground. Moreover, Article 42(2), as amended by the proclamation No. 42/1993, allows a woman to take paid maternity leave of 60 days which is counted after the day of delivery. She can also take paid leave on the day of delivery if a doctor confirms so (Article 42.1.3).

- Equal pay for equal work.

- Maximum working hours not to exceed 48 hrs/week, 8 hrs/day with

women) protected from working night shift, overtime and in
conditions (Article 32.3).

of child labor.

working conditions in many work places have improved slightly than the

previous five years. In general, safety standards are in place, but to some

extent there is a positive change in the vulnerability of workers. However,

organized workers in many sectors of the economy under the umbrella of the

Confederation of Eritrean Trade Unions (CETU) have been and have
to ensure minimum wages

improvement opportunities.

improved safety standards for sec

has been formed as a union of

The Confederation of Eritrean Tra

of trade unions administering in the service, manufacturing

le, mining and transport and communications industries. With food

area in 36% of the fertile land for in Eritrea, the

Confederation is expected to have major impact on future labor laws that will

improve the working conditions and wages of Eritrean workers.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

Violence against women is an obstacle to the achievement of the objectives of

development and peace. It violates and impairs the enjoyment of

of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Knowledge of these

of violence that results in physical and psychological harm to

of its causes and consequences has led me to

legally. It has tried to enact and reinforce penal, civil, labor

ative sanctions in domestic legislation to punish and

done to women and girls who are subjected to any form of

the home, workplace, the community or society.

NUEW

laws' a

redress

violence

The issue of violence against women in Eritrea takes many forms. Harmful

traditional practices such as female genital mutilation, domestic violence, rape and wife inheritance, along with other traditional manifestations of unequal value placed on female population and their unequal status in society. Some of the new legal laws include:

A person who intentionally causes serious bodily harm to another

person is guilty of causing serious

A person who, without lawful

seizes another person by force or abduction.

A person who commits a sexual

act against another person is guilty of

sexual assault.

A person who commits a sexual

act against another person is guilty of

sexual harassment.

A person who commits a sexual

act against another person is guilty of

sexual exploitation.

UNEW has launched consequent campaigns and

Since indepen

al State of women. Recently held a national

seminars to a

Girls' on the

the "Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against

rights in the

occasion of the 50th anniversary of Universal Declaration

M.

This UN-interagency campaign was initiated and coordina

and to

The Penal Code was also revised to exclude all discrim

ality is

and protective measures for women. For example, the

nant of

commuted to life imprisonment for convicted women who

nder the

have children under three years. Abortion, although still p

that the

Penal Code is now permitted in cases where a physical

cal and

women will suffer grave and permanent damage due to

Rape is

mental stress, or the pregnancy has resulted from rape

to 15

punishable under the law with a maximum sentence of 15

scene

years. Trafficking in prostitution, pornography and other in

the issue

enclosures are also punishable under the penal code. Pa

receive

of contraceptives. Women have the right to use con

information and request contraceptives for family planning

The introduction of moral and civics education in the MOE curricula has helped to introducing training programs in order to sensitize girls and boys and women and men to the personal and social detrimental effects of violence in the family, community and society and teach them how to

experience and promote training for victims and potential victims so that they can protect themselves and others against any violence.

ENVIRONMENT

in combating desertification.

8. WOMEN

8.1 The r

During the struggle for independence the importance of the linkage between women and the environment in Eritrea had been recognized. Their contribution towards the management of the environment as well as their profound knowledge of local environment as a result of their being the basic providers of the basic necessities, like fuel in the family was well recognized. However, however, immediate or war-related designed programs properly.

Post independence, a number of projects and programs of a high level of awareness of the society in general and women in particular to address the environmental issues, was initiated by the government, Ministry of Agriculture and other development agencies. NUEW is involved in mobilizing women to play active role in afforestation programs.

Desertification, as defined by the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, is a process of land degradation in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas. Land degradation is an environmental problem in Eritrea.

Eritrea has a National Action Program to Combat Desertification, which was prepared by a technical committee composed of representatives of institutions relevant to combating desertification and is continuing to combat desertification. The following measures are planned to be implemented by the NUEW to combat desertification.

• It finances the mobilization of women to plant trees.

integration of desertification issues in skills training programs of the NUEW.

• Awareness campaigns on environmental protection.

ewise, in this struggle against desertification, the GSE has initiated a long-term program of protecting the natural resources through Summer Work programs for Secondary School students and the communities at large with

emphasis on women. The programme aims to promote an environmental ethic, reducing resource use and to minimize waste, excessive consumption of natural resources and preservation of the environment.

The programme of planting and caring of more than 60,000 trees at the National park in commemoration of the Eritrean Martyrs who fought for peace and social justice is another indication of the government's commitment for environmental protection and conservation.

9. WOMEN IN SITUATIONS OF ARMED CONFLICT

Aggression and armed conflicts affect all people - men and women alike - but it is usually women and children that suffer the most. After independence in 1991 Eritrean refugees from the Sudan and Ethiopia returned back to their country. The Government of Eritrea and the Eritrean Relief and Refugees

Agency (ERRA) took the responsibility to take care of the needs of the refugees. With the assistance of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the safe and dignified return of the refugees was facilitated and their families, and other concerns were addressed. The ERRA provided shelter, food, water, medicine, education and training.

After several years of peace and reconstruction program, despite the progress that has been made to accelerate development, a dark cloud hangs over Eritrea as it currently faces another war with its neighbor, Ethiopia, over a border dispute. This situation which erupted as early as 1997 has not been resolved even though much effort has been made internationally.

involving the OAU and many concerned leaders of different countries, to

conflict peacefully. Regrettably, fierce fighting
slow down, and even destroy many of the gains

has resumed and the
achieved since libe

of the human rights of women in situations of

The GSE believes

Armed conflict are violations of the fundamental principles of international

Human Rights and International Law. This has become the case

ensuing border conflict with Ethiopia, where we are witnessing the dete

expropriation of property, ethnic cleansing and mass expulsion of more

61,000 Eritreans and Ethiopians of Eritrean origin - men, women and ch

- by the Ethiopian government. The inhuman act contravenes articles

Universal Declaration of Human Rights of the Child and the Convention

Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

While entire communities suffer the consequences of armed conflict, w

and girls are particularly affected because of their status in society and

sex. Currently, women and children who have been deported from Et

and the internally displaced. Loss of

make up the majority of the

ance and separation of relatives and

home and property, involunta

der of the day especially as a result

family disintegration have be

provided from the
for emergency
food, safe water

ensure that financial and material resources
international community and its international
relief that takes into account appropriate
shelter, education and social and health services

for resolution of the

The ANEW has been a pioneer in peace
includes:

is for and supports

Declaring that first and foremost, the

2. The Federation of African Women for Peace took the initiative and called upon Eritrean and Ethiopian women to voice for "Peace" and the Eritrean women added voices to it.

3. In the Sub-regional Follow-up meeting on the Implementation of the Dakar and Beijing Platforms for Action of Eastern and Southern Africa, in Seychelles, in February 1999, the NUEW called upon all African Women "To work for Peace on the soil of Africa, in order to achieve the concrete steps to change the position of the down-trodden African Women".

4. In the conference of "Women Organized for Peace and Non-Violence in Africa", a Pan African Women's Conference on a Culture of Peace, held in Zanzibar in May 1999, the Eritrean delegation and the NUEW and all the participants of the conference, including Ethiopia:

Convinced that any conflicts between two countries, especially any border conflict, should be resolved by peaceful means and

Aware that the border conflict between Eritrea and Ethiopia, among others, infold suffering to Eritrean and Ethiopian children called upon:

* The Eritrean and Ethiopian governments to resolve their border conflict under the OAU Charter and in recognition of the international community of border countries, throughout Africa, the OAU Framework Agreement on the Resolution of Conflicts

- ◆ The Eritrean and Ethiopian governments to effect an immediate cease-fire;
- ◆ The African Women's Committee for Peace and Development to work with women of Eritrea and Ethiopia in an effort between Eritrea and Ethiopia; and
- ◆ All women and women's organization of the world and the International Community to support and assist these efforts.

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